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ABSTRACT

Twenty years ago, the Zuni tribe separated from the larger school district of which it was part and formed its own school district. For the past 10 years, it has cooperated with the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence on improvement efforts, focused on classes in which students work together on a variety of challenging activities simultaneously. Students sit in circles, clusters, or with partners and play an active role in choosing topics for study and deciding how to share learning with each other. Instruction is based on seven principles: 1) teachers and students producing together; 2) developing language and literacy across the curriculum; 3) connecting school to students' lives; 4) teaching complex thinking skills; 5) teaching through conversation; 6) learning through observation of teacher modeling; and 7) encouraging student decision making. This 41-minute video gives examples of each of these principles in action as students are observed talking, negotiating, reading, writing, and sharing with each other and their teachers on tasks such as a newspaper project, an archaeology project, experiential physics activities, harvesting beans, exploring reservation water quality, Native language learning, and Zuni cultural activities. Learning is made relevant for students by utilizing their prior experiences as much as possible and drawing the curriculum from the students' community. (TD)

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